

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15
USIA-06 AGR-05 AID-05 IO-13 DHA-02 TRSE-00 /081 W
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P R 281930Z APR 77

FM AMEMBASSY PORT AU PRINCE
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4817
INFO AMEMBASSY KINGSTON
AMEMBASSY SANTO DOMINGO

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 PORT AU PRINCE 1553

EO 11652 GDS
TAGS: PINT, HA
SUBJECT: DUVALIERISM CONTINUES

1. BEGIN SUMMARY. IN TWO HARD-HITTING SPEECHES MARKING HIS SIXTH ANNIVERSARY AS HAITI'S PRESIDENT JEAN-CLAUDE DUVALIER REAFFIRMED HIS AUTHORITY, PUT AN END TO SPECULATION ABOUT HIS RELINQUISHING HIS LIFETIME JOB BUT - INADVERTENTLY - STARTED A NEW ROUND OF SPECULATION THAT HE WAS DEFYING U.S. PRESSURES FOR POLITICAL REFORM. ALTHOUGH THE GOVERNMENT DENIED ANY SUCH INTENTION, ITS VERY DENIAL SERVED TO KEEP ALIVE RUMORS THAT THE U.S. HAD ORDERED THE PRESIDENT TO DEMOCRATIZE THE REGIME. THE PRESIDENT'S MAIN OBJECTIVE WAS EVIDENTLY TO REASSURE THE REGIME'S OLD GUARD THAT, ALTHOUGH HE CONSIDERS "STRUCTURAL" CHANGES NECESSARY TO WIN THE "VICTORY OVER UNDERDEVELOPMENT," HE WILL NOT BE PUSHED INTO RADICAL POLITICAL EXPERIMENTS THAT MIGHT JEOPARDIZE THE STABILITY DUVALIERIST RULE HAS CREATED. END SUMMARY.

2. AFTER WEEKS OF INTENSE SPECULATION ABOUT HAITI'S POLITICAL FUTURE (PORT AU PRINCE 1441), THE EVENTS OF APRIL 22, MARKING THE SIXTH ANNIVERSARY OF JEAN-CLAUDE DUVALIER'S ACCESSION TO POWER, DISAPPOINTED THOSE
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WANTING DRAMATIC CHANGES, REASSURED THE GUARDIANS OF DUVALIERIST TRADITION, AND PROVOKED LIVELY SPECULATION ABOUT THE ACTUAL MEANING OF THE PRESIDENT'S LATEST STATEMENTS. THE DAY WAS MARKED BY A TE DEUM MASS, THE FORMAL ANNUAL OPENING OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY AND THE INAUGURATION OF A NEW GOVERNMENT RADIO STATION. MOST INTEREST CENTERED, HOWEVER, ON TWO OF THE PRESIDENT'S

ADDRESSES -- A BRIEF ONE IN CREOLE TO SEVERAL THOUSAND PEOPLE IN FRONT OF THE NATIONAL PALACE, MANY OF THEM SPECIALLY TRUCKED IN TO PORT AU PRINCE FOR THE OCCASION; AND A LENGTHY ONE IN FRENCH BEFORE THE ASSEMBLY.

3. THE CREOLE SPEECH. SPEAKING EXTENSIVELY IN CREOLE FOR THE FIRST TIME IN PUBLIC, THE PRESIDENT DECISIVELY PUT AN END TO SPECULATION THAT HE WOULD MODIFY HAITI'S PRESIDENCY-FOR-LIFE AND INTRODUCE MORE REPRESENTATIONAL POLITICAL PROCEDURES (PORT AU PRINCE 1470). HE FIRMLY STATED HIS INTENTION TO CARRY ON AND TO DO WHAT IS BEST FOR HIS PEOPLE. SEEKING TO CORRECT THE SWEEPING INTERPRETATIONS PLACED IN HIS APRIL 6 CALL FOR CHANGES IN "OBSOLESCENT AND SHAKY STRUCTURES," HE ARGUED THAT NO HAITIAN CHIEF OF STATE CONCERNED WITH DEVELOPMENT COULD DECREE POLITICAL MODIFICATIONS "EVERY FIVE, SIX, OR SEVEN YEARS, AS HAD BEEN DONE IN THE PAST."

4. THE ASSEMBLY SPEECH. THE PRESIDENT'S CREOLE ADDRESS DEPRIVED HIS PRESENTATION TO THE ASSEMBLY OF MUCH OF ITS SUSPENSE. IT WAS LARGELY A RECOUNTING OF THE ACHIEVEMENTS OF HIS SIX YEAR LEADERSHIP, THE CURRENT STATE OF THE NATION AND PROMISES FOR THE FUTURE. HE ALSO MADE AN APPEAL TO ALL CLASSES OF SOCIETY TO PUT ASIDE CERTAIN HAITIAN CHARACTER FAULTS (LACK OF CIVIC RESPONSIBILITY, LACK OF PATRIOTISM) AND PULL TOGETHER TO WIN THE VICTORY OVER UNDERDEVELOPMENT. THE PRESIDENT WAS MORE VIBRANT IN HIS DELIVERY THAN EVER BEFORE AND EVOKED SPONTANEOUS APPLAUSE FROM THE ASSEMBLY SOME TEN TIMES, PARTICULARLY

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AS HE ENUMERATED REFORMS OF PAST ABUSES. THE BIGGEST APPLAUSE WAS RESERVED FOR A STATEMENT THAT "WHILE TAKING ACCOUNT OF THE CONCERN OF INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS TO PROTECT HUMAN RIGHTS ... IT IS THE OPINION OF THE HAITIAN GOVERNMENT THAT SUCH DEMARCHES TO BE POSITIVE SHOULD NOT INFRINGE ON NATIONAL SOVEREIGNTY OR SERVE AS A PRETEXT FOR FORMS OF INTERVENTION IN THE INTERNAL AFFAIRS OF STATES." (THIS PASSAGE, ALTHOUGH DELIVERED IN DIFFERENT CIRCUMSTANCES, DOES NOT DIFFER SUBSTANTIALLY FROM ONE CONTAINED IN THE PRESIDENT'S JANUARY 2 STATE OF THE NATION ADDRESS).

5. THE AFP INTERPRETATION. THE LOCAL AGENCE FRANCE PRESSE (AFP) CORRESPONDENT FILED REPORTS ON THE TWO SPEECHES WHICH BROUGHT A PROMPT - A REVEALING - DISCLAIMER FROM THE GOVERNMENT. THE AFP DISPATCH ON THE CREOLE SPEECH CONTENDED THE PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE WAS: "IT IS OUT OF THE QUESTION TO DICTATE TO US OUR POLITICAL SYSTEM, THE BASIS OF WHICH IS THE STABILITY DERIVED FROM THE PRESIDENCY FOR-LIFE." AFP DESCRIBED

THIS AS AN "UNEQUIVOCAL WARNING" TO THE NEW AMERICAN ADMINISTRATION AND A REPLY TO THE RUMORS THAT CONSTITUTIONAL CHANGES IN THE PRESIDENCY-FOR-LIFE WERE BEING SOUGHT THROUGH AMERICAN PRESSURE. REGARDING THE ASSEMBLY SPEECH, AFP SAID THE PRESIDENT WAS WARNING AGAINST CERTAIN ASPECTS OF THE "MESSIANIC" POLICY OF THE NEW DEMOCRATIC ADMINISTRATION, I.E. ON HUMAN RIGHTS.

6. THE GOVERNMENT'S REACTION. FOLLOWING THE APPEARANCE OF THE AFP DISPATCH IN A LOCAL NEWSPAPER, THE GOH SWIFTLY ISSUED A COMMUNIQUE REJECTING THE AFP INTERPREATION AS GOING BEYOND "THE SIMPLE, PRECISE AND DIRECT WORDS OF THE PRESIDENT" AND DENYING HE MEANT TO CONVEY ANY KIND OF WARNING. THE GOVERNMENT WAS CLEARLY SURPRISED BY THE AFP INTERPREATION AND ON ITS OWN MOVED TO REMEDY THE DAMAGE THAT MIGHT HAVE BEEN DONE TO U.S./GOH RELATIONS HAD THE AFP VERSION BEEN ALLOWED TO STAND. THE GOVERNMENT
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HAS BEEN DEEPLY APPRECIATIVE OF U.S. HELP IN THE RECENT DROUGHT CRISI. BUT THE DENIAL DID NOT CONVINCE THOSE WHO BELIEVE THAT "WHERE THERE'S SMOKE, THERE'S FIRE" AND RUMORS STILL CIRCULATE IN THE CAPITAL ABOUT THE REASONS FOR THE PRESIDENT'S REMARKS.

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 PORT AU PRINCE 1553

7. DUVALIER'S STRATEGY. AFTER WEEKS OF INDECISION ON HOW TO REGAIN THE OFFENSIVE AT A TIME OF MOUNTING ECONOMIC TROUBLE AND POLITICAL SNIPING, THE PRESIDENT CAME BACK STRONGLY ON APRIL 22. HE EVIDENTLY HAD TWO OBJECTIVES: A) TO MAKE CLEAR THAT ANY "STRUCTURAL" CHANGES WILL COME IN AN ORDERLY MANNER AND IN A WAY THAT WILL NOT THREATEN THE STABILITY OF THE POLITICAL EDIFICE BUILT BY HIS FATHER; AND B) TO DRAW THE LINE FOR SOME OF THE HAITIAN MEDIA WHICH - USING THE HUMAN RIGHTS THEME - HAVE BEEN PRESSING FOR DEMOCRATIZATION IN TERMS JUDGED IMPRUDENT AND POLITICALLY DANGEROUS. AT THE SAME TIME, HE LEFT UNANSWERED THE QUESTIONS ABOUT THE NATURE AND TIMING OF SPECIFIC ADMINISTRATIVE REFORMS AND CABINET SHIFTS, AND LEFT THE CAPITAL IN A DEFLATED AND BEWILDERED MOOD. THE HARD DECISIONS ARE STILL TO COME FOR THE BELEAGUED HAITIAN PRESIDENT, EVEN THOUGH THE ARRIVAL OF THE SEASONAL RAINS IN PARTS OF THE COUNTRY HAVE RELIEVED SOME OF THE ANXIETY THAT HAS HUNG HEAVY OVER PORT AU PRINCE THIS SPRING. ISHAM

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Message Attributes

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